Block & Build But Make It Abolitionist

IC INTERRUPTING CRIMINALIZATION

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What is this?

- An abolitionist take on strategic frameworks[1] for fighting Right-wing, authoritarian, and fascist agendas and regimes;
- A way to understand and situate abolitionist organizing projects and campaigns within broader multi-tendency, multi-strategy united fronts in current political contexts;
- An invitation to expand our collective resistance beyond strategies that rely solely on and legitimize the carceral state, toward abolitionist visions for liberatory futures.
- An invitation to consider which strategic approach(es) you are most inspired and best positioned to move forward in this moment - blocking, blunting, breaking, bridging or building - and where you might have power, influence, and opportunities to act to move that strategy forward.

[1]This document is inspired by the "Block and Build Hotsheet" circulated by the Rising Majority during the Portal Project 2024 conference, and draws on the wisdom of many, including the "We Are Worth Fighting For" framework, Liberation Road's Refuse, Resist, Contest document, and the work of Political Research Associates, Building Movement Project, Ejerie Labs, Convergence, 22CI, and many more. Please see acknowledgments for more information on inspirations, contributions, and reviewers.

This document is rooted in two key understandings:

1

Criminalization is more than legislators passing and cops enforcing criminal laws by punishing people. It is a **political process** that creates groups of inherently criminalized "others" for whom rights do not exist in reality because they are framed as threats that must be controlled, punished, and removed. Virtually every institution of society engages in and enforces criminalization - from police to schools and universities to health care and social services - and everyone participates in it to some degree.

2

Right-wing, authoritarian, and fascist agendas, movements, and regimes are rooted in and function through criminalization. Criminalization is at the core of how they operate: they create and expand categories of "enemies within" who threaten an existing, desired, or imagined racist, sexist, ableist, transphobic, homophobic, imperialist, capitalist social order, and therefore must be contained, caged, and ultimately eliminated and eradicated.

Who Is This For?

- Abolitionist organizers looking to ground their work within Block & Build frameworks in current and rapidly evolving conditions of mounting authoritarianism and fascism;
- People across progressive movements in the U.S. and beyond who are drawn to Block & Build frameworks for resisting authoritarianism and fascism and are curious about strategies beyond electoral organizing that do not legitimize or fuel policing and punishment.

How Do We Use It?

Use this framework in individual, community, and organizational conversations to:

- Help people understand how abolitionist projects and campaigns fit within Block & Build strategies advanced by multi-strategy popular fronts of resistance;
- Help abolitionist organizers and groups choose and refine strategic priorities, targets, and actions that best align with their strengths, skills, bases of power, and local conditions under rapidly evolving conditions;
- Invite more people to confront, challenge, and interrupt criminalization as an essential part of resisting rising authoritarianism and fascism.

How Do We Use It?

continued

As you engage with the framework, be sure to:

- Continue to *critically assess current conditions* and how we came to this moment in order to inform action now and in the future;
- Act now in ways that are informed by our best thinking;
- Ensure that *what* we do and *how* we do it reflect the vision of the society we are working toward; and
- Engage in continuing assessment of our impact.

This framework will be accompanied by an update to Interrupting Criminalization's 2024 publication *Mapping Community Ecosystems of Collective Care* to support grassroots organizers and community members in taking local action.

BLOCK

Our goal is to BLOCK Right-wing, authoritarian, fascist, and carceral forces from building and consolidating power to harm our communities and repress resistance.

Ask yourself:

What forms of power, legislation, policies, actions, and narratives do we most need to effectively block right now to preserve and expand our capacity to fight against authoritarianism and fascism and for abolitionist futures?

Where do we currently have power to block Right-wing, authoritarian and fascist forces through individual and collective action and refusal (within and beyond electoral processes)? Where can we build it?

How do we build & support a collective culture and practice of refusal, resistance, and noncooperation at all levels?

How do we BLOCK efforts to divide and weaken us?

Examples of things we need to BLOCK

Anything that **increases the reach, capacity, resources, and power of the carceral state and fascist movements**, including:

- **Any invocation of martial law**, the Insurrection Act, the 1798 wartime powers act, or any other effort to suspend the Constitution or deploy the National Guard or U.S. military.
- **Militarization of the border** and use of military facilities to detain migrants.
- Increased defense, ICE enforcement, and law enforcement budgets, including military aid, contracts, and arms to Israel and genocidal and authoritarian forces in Sudan, the Congo, Haïti, El Salvador, and around the world.
- **Expansion or construction** of new jails, prisons, police, or immigrant detention facilities (including "cop cities").
- **Revocation** of visas, permanent resident status, or citizenship.
- **Deputization** of local law enforcement, private corporations, bounty hunters, militias, or private individuals to participate in mass detention and deportation (including 287(g) agreements & state and local contracts with ICE), police protests and public events, or enforce bans on health care, education, books, and use of public facilities/sex segregated facilities.
- **Criminalization of assistance to criminalized groups under "harboring" and "smuggling" laws** which penalize protecting, transporting, housing, feeding, and sharing information with others, including migrants, abortion and gender affirming care seekers, and people in the sex trades. While of course exploitation of these groups exists, criminalizing assistance only renders them

more vulnerable to exploitation, and further isolates and punishes them and their supporters without addressing the underlying conditions that produce exploitation.

- **Narratives, policies, and practices that criminalize** and designate groups of people (such as migrants, trans people, Muslims, protesters, people who express views that are anti-genocide/pro Palestine or anti-fascist, abortion seekers and providers, etc.) as "other," "violent," "the enemy within," "terrorists," "the worst of the worst," "threatening/poisoning our country," etc.

Anything that widens the net of surveillance and criminalization or increases penalties - including for drug-related offenses, disability and mental health status, immigration-related offenses, participation in protest or expression of political views, or for "political violence" or "hate crimes" (because these will inevitably be turned against us), such as:

- **Any system of registration** for migrants, pregnant people, trans and queer people, disabled and HIV affected people, people in the sex trades, sex offenders, etc.
- Designation of individuals, organizations and nations as providing **"material support to terrorism."**
- **Travel bans** targeting particular countries, identities, political beliefs, disabilities, or prior involvement in criminalized activities.
- **Law enforcement access to data** systems including drivers license, municipal ID, electronic health care, and other databases for the purposes of targeting migrants, transgender and queer people,

pregnant people, or people who express particular views.

- **Laws that designate fetuses as "people"** protected by law against homicide and other forms of harm or providing benefits like child tax credits ("fetal personhood" laws) and any further criminalization of abortion, trans health care, self-managed care, or self-determination & bodily autonomy through legislation, litigation, regulation, policy, funding, or civil suits.
- **Presence of police, ICE, DHS, FBI, DEA,** or any other other law enforcement in health care facilities, schools, places of worship, workplaces, libraries, and public spaces.
- **Limitations on access to care, benefits, or public spaces** based on prior contact with the criminal punishment system, disability, immigration, gender identity, sexual orientation, or other status.
- **Criminalization and suppression of speech**, including criminalization of journalists, media outlets, and individuals expressing views or sharing information and targeted funding cuts to public information infrastructure including libraries, post offices, museums and archives.
- **Enforcement of the Comstock Act**, which criminalizes distribution of abortion supplies and materials deemed "obscene" through the mail and common carriers (trains, planes, roads and highways).
- **Criminalization of poverty**, unhoused people, theft-related offenses, "fraud," evictions, etc. and cuts to safety net programs and programs serving disabled and elderly people.
- **Mobilization of mandated reporting** against families of trans and queer children, pregnant people and abortion seekers, educators and other adults supportive of trans and queer youth.

Anything that **criminalizes thought or expression**, including:

- Attacks on individuals, programs and institutions branded as promoting DEI, "gender ideology," "improper ideology," "woke ideology," "Marxist ideology," etc.
- Bans on school and library books.
- Criminalization and attempts to suppress individual journalists and independent media.
- Criminalization of Muslims and other faith communities.
- Adoption and enforcement of definitions of anti-semitism that include any expression of solidarity with Palestinians, any opposition to the genocide in Gaza and the West Bank, any critiques of the state of Israel's policies and practices.
- Criminalization of communication around abortion, gender affirming care, transgender and queer identities and expressions.
- Branding expressions of opposition to the current regime, policies or practices as "anti-American" "improper ideology" or "terrorism."

Anything that **enables or fuels vigilante violence**, including:

- **Resolutions, legislation, and actions recognizing or legitimizing local militias** and authorizing them to act in cooperation with local law enforcement or on orders from the Governor or President.
- Targeting of abortion and trans health care facilities and places where migrants, Muslims, and LGBTQ people gather.

Anything that **moves people from one carceral system to another**, such as:

- Forced psychiatric or "behavioral health" interventions.
- Forced labor or incarceration in mental health or drug treatment facilities or farms.
- Involvement of the "child welfare" or "child protective services" or "foster care" systems, also known as the family policing system.

Any effort to **isolate or pit us against each other**, including:

- Pitting trans children against other children seeking health care who are threatened by federal funding cuts.
- Framing anti-genocide pro Palestinian protesters as anti-semitic based solely on opposition to Israel's genocidal policies and practices.
- Condemnations of direct action and insistence on "peaceful" protest.
- Narratives that state or imply that marginalized racial, ethnic, religious or political groups and individuals are somehow "responsible for" current conditions based on their opposition to the genocide in Palestine or other political positions, and "deserve" any violence, harm, and deprivation they are experiencing due to administration policies.

BREAK

The goal is to BREAK the coalitional forces advancing the MAGA agenda AND the systems that enable them to enact their agenda.

Ask yourself:

What **systems, alliances, and collaborations do we need to effectively break** to weaken Right-wing, authoritarian and fascist forces?

How can we **drive wedges and exploit inevitable divisions** that emerge?

Examples of things we need to BREAK

- Collaboration between ICE, CBP, DHS, FBI and local law enforcement, including through Joint Terrorism Task Forces.
- Connections between law enforcement and Right wing militias.
- Alliances between corporate media and state actors, including the MAGA movement.
- Alliances between corporate media and trans exclusionary feminists (TERFs) and sex work exclusionary feminists (SWERFs).
- Alliances between organized religion and the MAGA movement.
- Alliances between the Make America Healthy Again Movement and advocates for the environment, organic foods, and holistic wellness.
- Alliances, solidarity, non-confrontation, and collaboration between organized labor and fraternal organizations representing police, prison, probation, family police, border patrol and immigration enforcement.
- Alliances between first responders (firefighters and EMTs), health care workers, and police/ICE.
- Reliance on or appeal to the carceral state to police, prosecute, or punish state actors, anti-abortion forces, vigilantes, or white supremacists.
- Alliances with the conservative "parental rights" movement who use "family integrity" arguments to attack trans children, eliminate abortion healthcare, and target schools and libraries.
- Cultures of consent and compliance - we know that many of us are scared and deeply at risk under current and evolving conditions. And, silence, consent, and compliance will not protect us - only collective action can!
- Individual and collective investment in vengeance and punishment.

BLUNT

The goal is to BLUNT the impact of the MAGA agenda, of current and anticipated political, economic, and climate collapse, and to defend our communities against multiple forms of violence on multiple fronts, including funding cuts and harmfu legislation, policies, actions and narratives.

Ask yourself:

What do we need to do to protect people, individuals, communities?

How can we do it through community defense, mutual aid, underground networks of support, and, where possible, protective laws and policies?

Examples of things we need to BLUNT

- Fight to **reduce budgets, resources, weapons, power, personnel, reach, scope, capacity, and legitimacy** of police, prisons, prosecutors, immigration detention, courts, Homeland Security, ICE, Border Patrol (etc.)
- Wage **pardon and clemency** campaigns to get people out of prisons and jails, **expunge criminal convictions, and eliminate collateral consequences** of convictions and grounds for deportation.
- Create and support **secure and trustworthy** communications and information infrastructure that is not owned, run or accessible by the state, law enforcement, or their corporate backers and allies.
- Build **robust infrastructures of mutual aid** for:
  - » Migrants
  - » Trans, gender nonconforming and queer people
  - » Disabled people and elders
  - » Protesters (particularly anti-genocide/pro-Palestinian protesters
  - » People seeking, providing, and supporting criminalized care including abortion care and gender affirming care
  - » Fired and laid off workers

Create **infrastructures of sanctuary and community defense**:

- » Circulate and invite pledges to interrupt criminalization and refuse discrimination, and to hire, welcome, support, and protect people from targeted groups in community businesses, faith communities, libraries, and spaces
- » Start Cop/ICE watch programs
- » Provide clinic defense for abortion and gender affirming care providers, seekers, supporters
- » Defend queer and trans spaces

- Push legislators to enact and enforce "**shield laws**" which protect providers offering criminalized care to people in states where it is banned.
- Push legislators to enact and enforce "**sanctuary laws**" which bar local authorities from cooperating with federal immigration enforcement.
- Push legislators to enforce state constitutional protections and anti-discrimination laws to reduce incentives for institutions to comply with threats of federal targeting and funding cuts.

Broaden

& Bridge

The goal is to BROADEN our movements by working to BRIDGE across silos, sectors, and communities to strengthen and deepen our resistance.

Ask yourself:

Who do we need to reach out to and build alliances with and how?

How can we bridge abolitionist and reformist politics to move forward in alignment and coordination as a united front across political difference against the current authoritarian acceleration of the carceral state? Where can we find common ground to build upon - especially as reformists blame

Examples of things we need to BROADEN

- Build and strengthen alliances with **organized labor**.
- Bridge and strengthen alliances with **anti-war and anti-militarism** movements, including veterans.
- Build bridges with **anti-capitalist and boycott movements** like #TeslaTakedown that draw the connections between crony capitalism and carceral actors.
- Create opportunities and **shared spaces of learning and solidarity** with anti-authoritarian, anti-fascist, and abolitionist movements across the globe.
- Find common ground with **anti-violence movements**.
- Build relationships with people who have experienced the violence of incarceration, detention, and deportation and their families.
- Build and strengthen **alliances with aligned government workers**, health workers, and social services workers who are laid off, fired, or under increasing surveillance.
- Build and strengthen alliances with organizations and groups launching **defense campaigns for public libraries, post offices, and journalists and journalism outlets** being targeted by repression.
- Collaborate with **media workers and journalists** as they are increasingly criminalized.

BUILD

The goal is to advance affirmative abolitionist visions, programs, and practices to address current and future conditions and community needs.

Ask yourself:

What are we building that responds to current needs and conditions and advances our collective vision?

How are we building power to bring about abolitionist futures?

How are we practicing transformative justice under current conditions as a way of protecting our people from the state, shifting conditions of violence and harm, and building power?

Examples of things we need to BUILD

- **Connections and Community** - it is essential that we gather regularly and creatively to build relationships, trust, belonging, and political consciousness and alignment, to safety plan, grieve, fortify our spirits, and create networks of care, interdependence, and reciprocity.
  - » Create as many (in person and virtual, public and private) spaces and opportunities as possible to process, analyze, and make sense of what is happening as possible through community and kitchen table conversations, dinner parties and barbeques, walks, play days, and other group activities, collaborative crafting or 'zine making, film screenings, book clubs, reading groups, and podcast listening sessions, teach-ins, prayer circles, and any other way you can be in conversation with your neighbors, friends, family, coworkers and community.
- **Bases of power** who will mobilize beyond individual issues and campaigns to advance a vision, politic, and an agenda.
- **Capacity to absorb newly activated people** into our organizations and movements through low threshold entry points, political education, and leadership development, opportunities to engage in lower risk action and a ladder of engagement.
- **Capacity for individual and collective refusal** - to delay, disrupt, distract, throw sand in the gears, and refuse to comply. Create regular time to think creatively about strategies and tactics, and assess what is and isn't working.
- **Capacity, programs and community institutions to prevent, navigate and transform conflict and harm** in our interpersonal lives, networks, organizations, and communities. Conflict both immobilizes us and renders us vulnerable to state scrutiny, surveillance, interference, targeting and rupture. We need to practice worlds rooted in transforma tive justice by strengthening our skills and building our muscles of self-governance.

- **Community crisis** response teams and projects to meet community needs and limit police contact.

- **Robust infrastructures of mutual aid** and networks of resources and care that don't depend on the state, meet needs for everyone, address the economic insecurity that drives to fascism, and model abolitionist visions for:
  - » Migrants,
  - » Trans, gender nonconforming, and queer people
  - » Disabled people and elders
  - » Protesters (particularly anti-genocide/pro-Palestinian protesters),
  - » People seeking, providing, and supporting criminalized care including abortion care and gender affirming care
  - » Fired and laid off workers
  - » Cash poor and abandoned communities

- **Infrastructures of sanctuary and community defense rooted**:
  - » Circulate and invite pledges to interrupt criminalization and refuse discrimination, and to hire, welcome, support, and protect people from targeted groups in community businesses, faith communities, libraries, and spaces
  - » Start Copwatch and ICE watch programs
  - » Provide clinic defense for abortion and gender affirming care providers, seekers, and supporters
  - » Defend queer and trans community spaces

- **Community defense networks** including legal, financial, bail and jail/prison support networks, safety nets for targeted individuals and organizations.

- **Communication, information, and media distribution networks** that are not surveilled or controlled by our opposition.

- **Spaces in which to develop affirmative visions, models and experiments** rooted in transformative justice and practice new social, economic, and political relations and governance, such as people's movement assemblies and solidarity economies.

- Spaces/networks in which to regularly **share frameworks, assessments, skills, training, learning**.

- **Transnational Power** by forging strong connections with groups and movements in the U.S. and around the world who are connected places directly impacted by U.S. foreign policy and wars.
- Organizations and processes dedicated to **ethical, movement-driven documentation, information gathering, and archiving** practices to tell and preserve the stories of our communities.

How Do We Do It?

Understanding & building power

While we are feeling increasingly powerless *in the face of the rapid and expansive consolidation of Right-wing, authoritarian, and fascist power at the federal, state, and international levels,* ***we are not without power.***

We need to ask ourselves:

- **Where do we as individuals hold power and influence** in our families, neighborhoods, communities, workplaces, affinity groups (unions, alumni and professional associations, fraternities, sororities, faith and spiritual communities, recreational groups, as consumers, etc.)? How can we wield that power to share information and resources and shape and invite action?

- **Where can we collectively build and exercise power** as communities, organizations, coalitions, and movements?

- **Which levers of power are still available to us? Which are no longer viable under current conditions?**

- **What targets are within our reach** (think, #TeslaTakedown)?

- **Where can we collectively refuse to comply** and insist on living into our values? For instance, where anti-discrimination provisions are repealed, we can invite businesses, workplaces, and community spaces to pledge to refuse to discriminate. We can collectively commit to creating and protecting sanctuary spaces. We can refuse to report people to the state, refuse to stop caring for people, refuse to follow rules that don't respect people's humanity, refuse to comply with threats and fear mongering.

When considering these questions, it can be helpful to get specific about where and how the state and MAGA forces have and exercise power - as illustrated by this graphic created by Scot Nakagawa.

While it may appear that one person or a small group of people are wielding all the power, the fact is that they can't do it alone - they need the cooperation of legislators, courts, state agencies and state institutions, and of the military, police, and private militias and vigilante groups. Most importantly, **they need some degree of consent and compliance by a significant chunk of the population. This is where we have the power to shift things** and can have a real impact - because there are more of us, and we form the base of the pyramid of power.

When thinking about how to build people power to counter the power of authoritarian rule, it is helpful to think about the different kinds of power we have, as illustrated in this chart by Makani Themba from her forthcoming book Our Beautiful Next. **How can we harness, direct, and wield the power of our relationships and connections, our words and actions, our labor, resources, faith, knowledge, influence, and belief in possibilities for a liberatory future?**

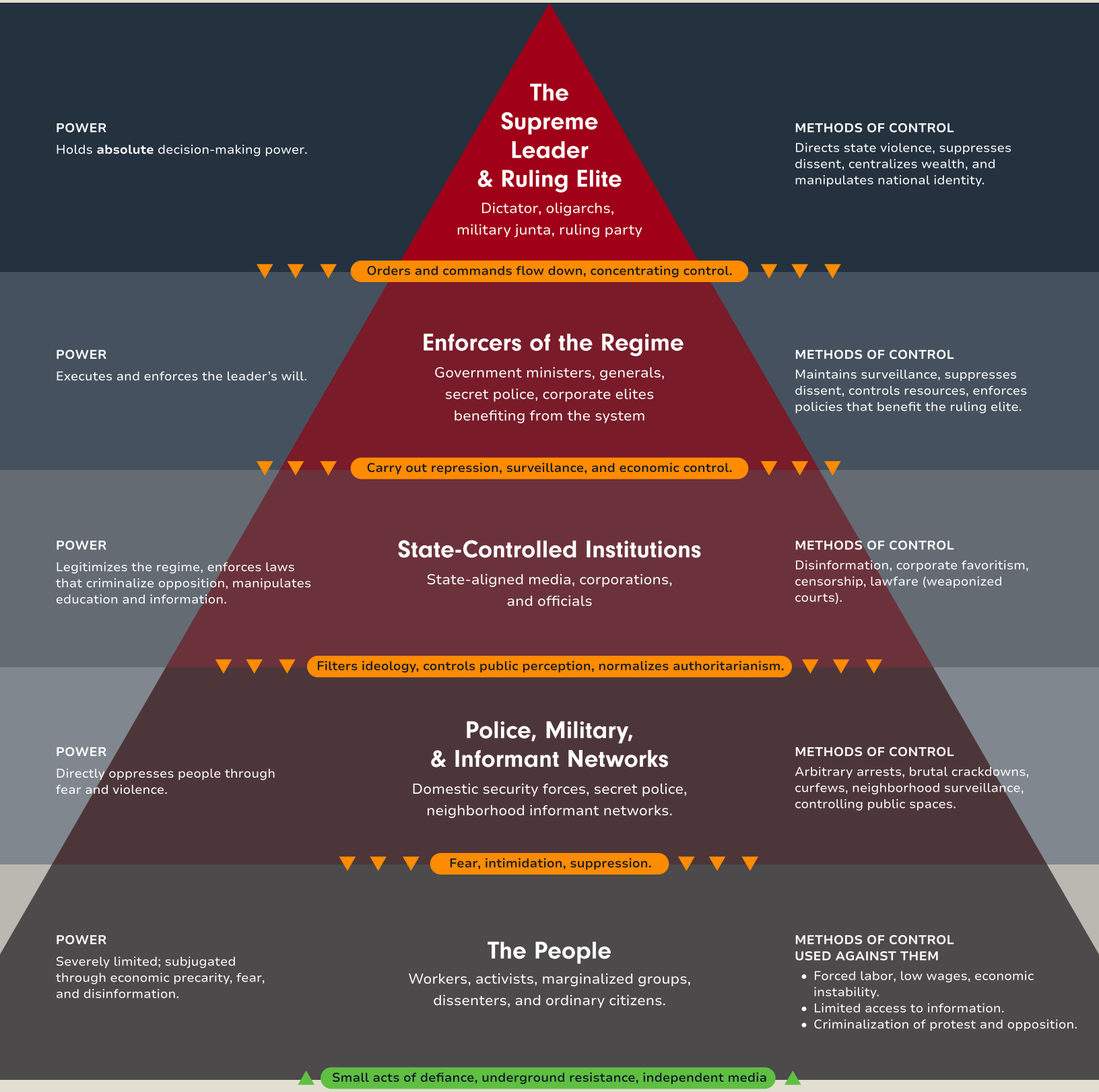
Finally, we can and **must assess and learn from how we got here** as we build our power to resist and enact a different future.

Image 1 was created by Scot Nakagawa for the Anti-Authoritarian Playbook newsletter. Please do not reproduce without attribution (page 25).

Image 2 was created by Makani Themba for publication in her book Our Beautiful Next. Please do not reproducee without attribution (page 26)

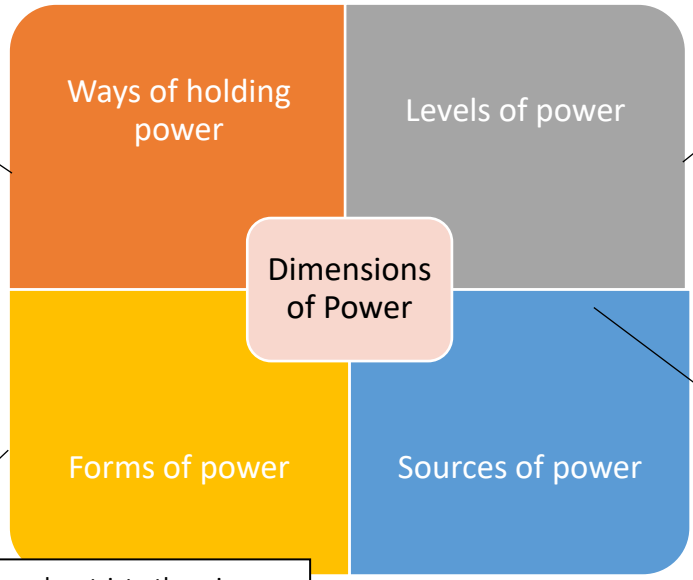
POWER UNDER AUTHORITARIAN RULE

A System of Control and Repression


The Supreme Leader & Ruling Elite
Dictator, oligarchs, military junta, ruling party
POWER
Holds **absolute** decision-making power.
METHODS OF CONTROL
Directs state violence, suppresses dissent, centralizes wealth, and manipulates national identity.
Orders and commands flow down, concentrating control.
Enforcers of the Regime
Government ministers, generals, secret police, corporate elites benefiting from the system
POWER
Executes and enforces the leader's will.
METHODS OF CONTROL
Maintains surveillance, suppresses dissent, controls resources, enforces policies that benefit the ruling elite.
Carry out repression, surveillance, and economic control.
State-Controlled Institutions
State-aligned media, corporations, and officials
POWER
Legitimizes the regime, enforces laws that criminalize opposition, manipulates education and information.
METHODS OF CONTROL
Disinformation, corporate favoritism, censorship, lawfare (weaponized courts).
Filters ideology, controls public perception, normalizes authoritarianism.
Police, Military, & Informant Networks
Domestic security forces, secret police, neighborhood informant networks.
POWER
Directly oppresses people through fear and violence.
METHODS OF CONTROL
Arbitrary arrests, brutal crackdowns, curfews, neighborhood surveillance, controlling public spaces.
Fear, intimidation, suppression.
The People
Workers, activists, marginalized groups, dissenters, and ordinary citizens.
POWER
Severely limited; subjugated through economic precarity, fear, and disinformation.
METHODS OF CONTROL USED AGAINST THEM
• Forced labor, low wages, economic instability.
• Limited access to information.
• Criminalization of protest and opposition.
Small acts of defiance, underground resistance, independent media

Authoritarian rule is a system of control where power flows downward, but resistance and defiance can challenge even the most oppressive regimes. The question is—how do the people organize to push back?

Spheres/Sites of Power (the spaces where power is exercised) include military, government/legislature and politics, business and commerce, faith and belief, education, knowledge production and memory, mass media, popular culture/culture and entertainment, land and natural resources, beauty and aesthetics, familial and interpersonal spaces. Many of these often overlap, intersect, and interact upon each other.



- Distributional/Power over
- Collective/Power with
- Power within
- Power behind
- Power under

- Individual
- Group/Organization/Community
- Translocal
- Nation State
- Transnational
- Structural/Systemic

- Force – coercion, punishment, the ability to deprive and restrict others in their movement and/or access to freedom, goods, etc., through force and/or the threat of force
- Economic power/influence over resources, goods, labor, currency and services, who accesses them, who profits; the power to determine/influence value, etc.
- Ideological power over what is considered "mainstream" ideas, values and beliefs
- Knowledge and memory - power to determine what information is of value and "true;" what's science, etc.
- Legal/legislative power to determine what is lawful and "right"
- Governing power to exercise authority over what/how decisions are made
- Moral power to determine what's considered moral or immoral
- Narrative power to determine the dominant stories people use to make sense of everything
- Cultural power to determine what's beautiful, ugly, popular, trendy; what is worth archiving/curating; how we identify ourselves in community or as distinct from others. All of these forms interact and act upon one another.

- Authority
- Influence/Pressure/Refusal
- [Organized Base]*
- Personal Charisma
- Ancestral/Higher

We need to reflect on the matrix of form, source, level, ways of holding along with the sphere or site in order to identify how and where we contest for power. For example, it is not enough to have power over business and commerce in a community and expect economic relations to be transformative. We must also look at how that power is being held. Is it collectively held (power with)? Is our power at the group level, translocal (e.g., we hold power in local places as part of a network of likeminded local changemakers?), at the level of systems? What kind of authority do we have to be self-determining? How do we leverage the power we have to grow it and expand into other forms?

Contradictions & Tensions

As we move through this strategic framework there are a number of overarching tensions and contradictions for abolitionist organizers that we must surface and contend with.

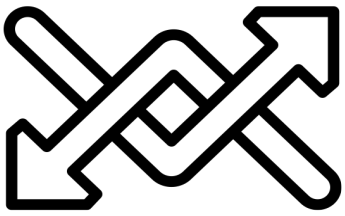
That **doesn't mean we can or must resolve them in order to move forward**. In fact, given the rapidly narrowing political terrain, it is more critical than ever that we act now while we still can.

But we do need to be aware of these contradictions and tensions and make our best assessments of how to navigate them in any given moment.

And, we don't all have to do everything! We can each find our lane and fight on different fronts - the key is to do so in alignment and coordination across different strategies or even disagreement, without undermining other Block & Build strategies.

Contradictions/Tensions About Power

We have been out organized: we don't currently have the power we need to stop all of what is happening in the US and globally.



We do have individual and collective power of action and refusal, and there are opportunities where we have and can build governing power.

- How do we think about building power as abolitionists? How can we move from perceptions of power as inherently coercive to practicing building "power with" rather than "power over"? What forms of power and community building do we engage in abolitionist organizing? Are we building decentralized "people power," economic power, labor power, electoral power, or something else?

- How do we move from attempting to influence people in power based on facts and moral persuasion to building and wielding our people power under mounting repression?

- How do we focus our efforts on stopping and reversing the consolidation of administrative power at the federal level into an authoritarian and fascist regime (i.e. an administrative coup led by the President and unelected leaders of DOGE with the support of Congress) while simultaneously protecting and defending our communities at the local level?

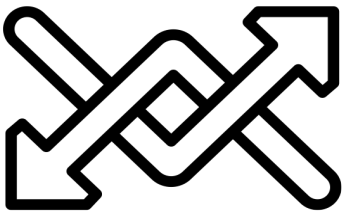
- How can we focus on building local insurgencies and bases of power and building a broad-based national/transnational united front against authoritarianism and fascism?

- How do we navigate federal and state government efforts to quash local power through legislation, targeting by law enforcement and lawsuits, takeover of local institutions or governments, and funding cuts, mandates, and limitations on raising revenue?

- How do we navigate a growing move to the Right at the local level even in presumably progressive places?

Contradictions/Tensions about the Carceral State

We depend on institutions and programs of the carceral state to survive.



We want to dismantle the carceral state.

We are navigating the **intentional and rapid dismantling of key institutions and programs of the (carceral) administrative state** such as health care, social security and social safety net programs, while at the same time the violent punitive arms of the carceral state are being exponentially empowered and expanded.

Abolitionists believe the carceral state must be dismantled, but not to instate a white Christofascist state or to complete the neoliberal project of deregulating corporations in service of capitalist accumulation. **How do we advance our most liberatory visions for the future in this context instead of fighting for the bare minimum in the face of fascism?**

- How do we defend what is being destroyed without legitimizing the policing and criminalization inherent in existing public institutions and administrative and benefits systems, or being limited by what existed instead of dreaming and fighting for the institutions and systems we want, free from policing and punishment?

    » For example, how do we fight for benefit programs like welfare, food stamps, Medicare, and Medicaid without legitimizing the ways in which they police and exclude people, are insufficient for survival,

deny dignity, and fail to address the structural conditions that lead people to need them?

- How do we navigate/attend to the ways we depend on the carceral state for survival (Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, funding for disabled people/organizations, SNAP, Headstart), services (FEMA, DoE), information (NOAA, NIH, National Archives), limited protections (CDC, FDA Consumer Finance Protection Board, EEOC, EPA, etc.) and global reliance on US AID and UN agencies funded by the US WITHOUT uncritically calling for a return to a status quo under which benefits are not universally available, climate collapse goes unaddressed, corporations prey on and discriminate against people, and the US profits from extraction and imperialism?

Contradictions around criminalization and the "rule of law"

- How do we shift away from appealing to, relying on, and calling for a return of "the rule of law," recognizing that "the rule of law" manufactures and upholds the carceral state and no longer exists/never existed when it comes to powerful elites?

- How do we build and act on the understanding that criminalization is central to the operation of authoritarianism and fascism, and must be interrupted and challenged on all fronts as an essential part of resisting it?

- How do we expand our understanding of criminalization beyond criminal laws to recognize and addressing the impacts of criminalizing policies, practices, institutions, spaces, narratives, and state-sponsored, endorsed, and emboldened vigilante violence, and criminalization through anticipatory compliance (i.e. clinics and hospitals withdrawing trans health care and refusing to provide care to miscarrying pregnant people)?

- How do we move people from the belief that they can avoid criminalization if they just keep their head down and continue to accept, comply with, and legitimize criminalization and increasing levels of violence against "others" to understanding that the only way to stop repression and authoritarianism is to immediately refuse and resist collectively in large numbers? How do we move people to action before and when they are directly impacted?

- How do we interrupt criminalization - starting with the ways each of us participates in and legitimizes it? How do we move from pulling at the edges of who is criminalized and how, and what are acceptable levels of violence against criminalized people to uprooting the legitimacy of criminalization altogether as a response to conflict, harm, and need and rooting our responses in transformative justice?

- How do we shift health care providers and others from finding ways to operate within a highly regulated environment (especially with respect to abortion and trans health care) to a wholly criminalized context - expanding scope of who is criminalized/ "criminal"?

Contradictions/Tensions about the shape and scope of resistance

- How do we shift from understanding rising fascism and authoritarianism in the US as "unprecedented" to recognizing the U.S.' long history of fascism and inspiring fascist regimes elsewhere? How do we understand fascism and imperialism as expressions of colonialism, racial capitalism and imperialism manifesting across the globe in the context of and in response to climate collapse, massive migration, resource exploitation and exhaustion, social disruptions, and global resistance?

- How do we advance transnational cultures of care, belonging, invitation, accountability, and interdependence under pressure?

- How do we focus on community defense in the face of the might of the carceral state/expansive surveillance/increasing vulnerability to violence/disappearance while simultaneously moving offensive, power building strategies?

If you would like support strategizing about how to Block & Build but Make it Abolitionist, please reach out to Interrupting Criminalization's Resisting Criminalization Help Desk!

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